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Srebrenica:

“The impossible choices of a Commander.”

‘The soldier, be he friend or foe, is charged with the protection of the weak and unarmed. It is the very essence and reason for his being. When he violates this sacred trust, he not only profanes his entire cult but threatens the fabric of international society.’

General Douglas MacArthur

PJ de Vin

6 March 2008

Master of Military Studies Paper

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Executive Summary

Title: Srebrenica: "The impossible choices of a Commander."

Author: Lieutenant Colonel Peter Jan de Vin, Royal Netherlands Marine Corps.

Thesis: The objective of this paper is to examine the moral dimension of the events in Srebrenica, and explore whether Lieutenant Colonel Thom Karremans took the correct moral and ethical approach, as he decided not to defend the enclave Srebrenica during the first five days of the attack on Srebrenica by the Bosnian Serbs.

Discussion: When faced with an ethical or moral dilemma, decisions are extremely difficult. Commanding officers, however, need to make split second decisions in circumstances in which the ethical or moral dilemma might not have presented itself yet to the full extent. Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6 – 11, defines an ethical dilemma as, "the necessity to choose between competing obligations in circumstances that prevent one from doing both. Action is at the hearth of ethical behaviour. An academic understanding of what is right and wrong is irrelevant unless it is coupled with appropriate action. And even then, the answer is not always clear." Action is clearly the most important element in this definition. Taking the appropriate action to solve the dilemma requires choosing between competing obligations. However, to make that choice between competing obligations one must first recognize the dilemma. The skills to recognize an ethical dilemma and the choice between competing obligations may be influenced by several factors. In order to answer the thesis therefore, a framework for analysis is used. This framework addresses the following questions. First, was the relevant ethical problem recognized? Second, were the right decisions made when faced with a moral dilemma? This includes efficient communication of that decision. Third, did Karremans resist making decisions that were unjust but convenient for that situation?

Conclusions: The decisions Karremans had to make during the fall of the enclave were very much about life and death and clearly influenced the history of Srebrenica and its population. The presented framework for analyses identifies skills that commanders need to possess to make adequate decisions when faced with ethical and moral dilemmas. In the case of Srebrenica, it became clear that these skills were affected by many external and internal factors. As a result, it was extremely difficult for Karremans to make the moral right decisions and to take appropriate action. In retrospect, however, I believe that Karremans did not take the correct moral and ethical approach as he decided not to defend the enclave during the attack on Srebrenica.

Preface

In July 1995 the "Safe Area" Srebrenica fell into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. Dutchbat III was the third Dutch battalion that was tasked to safeguard the enclave against hostilities, to protect the population through its presence, to demilitarize the Muslims, and to create conditions in which humanitarian relief could be provided. The focus of this paper lies on the days from January 18th till July 11th, 1995. I want to emphasize that Lieutenant Colonel Thom Karremans had no idea that the loss of the enclave Srebrenica would result in the death of about 7,500 Muslim men. Therefore, this drama that cries to heaven plays no role in answering the question whether or not Karremans took the correct moral and ethical approach as he decided not to defend the enclave. Furthermore, I also want to emphasize that the conclusions are meant as recommendations to future commanders, not to accuse Lieutenant Colonel Thom Karremans or any other member of Dutchbat for what happened in the enclave. The responsibility for the fall of the enclave and the mass murder was of the Bosnian Serbs in general and General Mladic in particular.

I would like to thank Dr. Paolo Tripodi for his judicious criticism and encouragement to start this project. The writing itself benefited from excellent editing, I am much indebted to Andrea Hamlen, always insightful and supportive, who made many valuable suggestions and eliminated needless repetition.

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Introduction

On April 16th, 2002, the Dutch Prime Minister, Wim Kok, offered Queen Beatrix his cabinet's resignation. The reason for this resignation was the publication of the NIOD rapport (Netherlands Institute on War Documentation) on the fall of the United Nations' (UN) "Safe Area" Srebrenica. Seven years after the collapse of Srebrenica in 1995, the Dutch cabinet concurred with the report's conclusion that the international community had not done enough to protect the people living in the safe areas in Bosnia. Prime Minister Kok stated that, as the international community was anonymous and therefore could not take responsibility, the Dutch government however, as a member of that international community, could. Kok emphasized that the Netherlands was not accepting the blame for the mass murder that took place, neither could Dutchbat IIIi (hereafter referred to as Dutchbat) be held responsible for what happened in the enclave of Srebrenica. According to Kok the responsibility for the fall of the enclave and the mass murder was of the Bosnian Serbs and General Mladic in particular.¹

The political decision in 1993, to send Dutch soldiers to the Former Yugoslavia was widely supported by the Dutch society.² In the Netherlands public and media pressure 'to do something – anything!' to end the humanitarian crisis in the former Yugoslavia was strong, especially when the disturbing images of prison-camps and ethnic cleansing reached the public at the end of 1992.³ Strong conviction that the Muslim population in Bosnia Herzegovina needed protection and humanitarian assistance led to this support for the political decision. Dutch troops were to be deployed in several locations in Yugoslavia.

i The Dutch battalions that were deployed to Srebrenica were successively given the name Dutchbat I, II, and III.

When on Tuesday, July 11th, 1995, the 'safe area' Srebrenica, protected by Dutchbat, fell into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs, the world reacted in disbelief. The Dutch government, Dutch society, and the international community were extremely worried for the safety of Dutch peacekeepers. There was a national and international sigh of relief when on July 22th, the last men of the Dutch battalion arrived safely in Zagreb. Initially, the first days after the fall of the enclave, Dutchbat was showered with praise for their actions. Madeleine Albright, the United States Permanent Representative at the UN, said that the Dutch peacekeepers "set a standard for bravery and dedication that will be long remembered."⁴

However, already on July 17th, 1995, the first indications that a human tragedy might have taken place in and outside the enclave surfaced. The origin of the 'genocide issue' lay with the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk. The Dutch government had agreed not to make any statements about the situation in the enclave until all Dutchbat members were in safety.⁵ As Pronk addressed the issue before Dutchbat was in safety, and as an official member of the Dutch government, it was breaking news. On July 15th, Pronk arrived in Tuzla to assess what assistance the Netherlands could provide to the Displaced Persons (DPs) from Srebrenica. Pronk also hoped, however, to find out more about the fate of several thousand missing Muslim men from Srebrenica – an issue that was creating some serious concern.⁶ He held several meetings with representatives of the UN, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Bosnian authorities, and DPs at Tuzla Air Base. On his return to the Netherlands, on July 17th, Pronk made immediately clear that "thousands of people have been murdered. (...) Real mass murders have taken place. This is something that *we knew* could happen. The Serbs have done this several times. It's genocide that is taking place."⁷ When he repeated these accusations on Dutch

television the following day, the national, and later the international debate on what really happened in Srebrenica, and the role Dutchbat played, started.

The question was also quickly raised as to why, if Pronks' account was true, the Dutch soldiers had done nothing to prevent the killing of thousands of Muslim men. Critical commentaries began to appear in the press. On July 17th, on the opinion page of *De Volkskrant*, one of the major newspapers in the Netherlands, Herman Wigbold, a senior journalist, wondered whether there was a major difference between the conductors who drove the trains to Westerbork (the deportation transit camp set up by the Nazis in the Netherlands during the Second World War) and UN peacekeepers who ride on the Bosnian Serb trucks.⁸

From then on, the public opinion turned against Dutchbat, which was blamed for the fall of the enclave and therefore, for the mass murder of about 7,500 Muslim men. Many in the Netherlands felt the battalion should have done more to protect the Muslim population and that the soldiers had apparently given their own safety the highest priority.⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel Thom Karremans, the commanding officer of Dutchbat, in particular was blamed for the weak resistance that Dutchbat put up against the Bosnian Serbs. In his defence, Karremans stated that Dutchbat was in no position to defend the enclave, and that an attempt to do so would have caused many casualties among his soldiers and innocent refugees.¹⁰ According to Robert Siekmann, Dutchbat did not violate the UNPROFOR mandateⁱⁱ or superior orders during the Bosnian-Serb attack on Srebrenica or during the evacuation of the Muslim population.¹¹ He

ii According to the mandate UN troops were ordered to deter attacks against the safe areas; to monitor the ceasefire; to promote the withdrawal of military and paramilitary units; and to occupy some key points on the ground, in addition to participating in the delivery of humanitarian relief to the population.

concluded that behaviour of Dutchbat, notwithstanding moral and ethical considerations, stood the test of legal criticism.¹²

While Dutchbats' actions stand the test of legal criticism a detailed moral analysis of Dutchbats' conduct is not yet available. The objective of this paper is to examine the moral dimension of the events in Srebrenica and explore whether Karremans took the correct moral and ethical approach as he decided not to defend the enclave during the first five days of the attack on Srebrenica.

In order to answer this question I will first present a framework for moral analysis. Then, I will focus on the key events that occurred in the enclave from January 18th until July 11th, 1995, and I will analyse the most important decisions that Karremans made from July 6th to 11th, within the presented moral and ethical framework.

A moral and ethical framework for analysis

Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6 – 11, defines an ethical dilemma as, “the necessity to choose between competing obligations in circumstances that prevent one from doing both. Action is at the hearth of ethical behaviour. An academic understanding of what is right and wrong is irrelevant unless it is coupled with appropriate action. And even then, the answer is not always clear.”¹³ Action is clearly the most important element in this definition. Taking the appropriate action to solve the dilemma requires choosing between competing obligations. However, to make that choice between competing obligations one must first recognize the dilemma. The ability to recognize an ethical dilemma and the choice between competing obligations may be influenced by several factors. According to Van Iersel, and Van Baarda a commander should develop those skills necessary to:¹⁴

1. Recognize a relevant ethical problem. This, however, may be severely hampered by exhaustion, lack of information, strong prejudice, or external influence of ones beliefs.
2. Make the right decision when faced with a moral dilemma; this includes efficient communication of that decision. Unclear orders or legal guidelines, unworkable restrictions, and abuse of laws or treaties may influence this decision-making process.
3. Resist making a decision that is unjust but convenient for that situation.

During a mission, the commanding officer determines how the objective is to be achieved and what risks should be taken. It is precisely during the courses of action development that the moments of decision that require moral competences will be encountered: For instance, should priority be given to providing humanitarian assistance, or to one's own safety? What are higher

headquarters orders? Van Baarda and Verweij rightly stressed that having to make a decision in fractions of a second is not a matter of theory for military personnel, but part of their reality. That decision can change the course of history. It could be a decision involving matters of life and death.¹⁵

The decisions Karremans had to make during the fall of the enclave were very much about life and death and clearly influenced the history of Srebrenica and its population. In November 1996, British journalist Robert Fisk stated, 'The enclave was an UN safe haven [sic], and the Dutch were supposed to defend it. Through bureaucratic misunderstandings, incompetence and – yes – some cowardice too, they failed to do so. And since the Dutch represented us, that failure is our shame and humiliation for all time.'¹⁶

When faced with an ethical or moral dilemma, decisions are extremely difficult. Often these decisions are only in part defensible. Commanding officers, however, need to make split second decisions in circumstances in which the ethical or moral dilemma might not have presented itself yet to the full extent.

Srebrenica January 18th - July 11th, 1995

The UN units that were deployed in the safe areas in Bosnia since 1993 were expected to deter an attack by the warring factions. This meant little more than a symbolic presence. UN Undersecretary-General, head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Kofi Annan wrote in 1993 in a code cable to the then Swedish Force Commander, Lieutenant General Lars-Eric Wahlgren, that the demilitarisation of Srebrenica and the other safe areas only meant that the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) took on the 'moral responsibility' for the safety of the safe areas, but he also realized that UNPROFOR did not possess the military resources to guarantee safety. Annan stated that a small number of peacekeepers could not be expected to deal with a large-scale invasion by Bosnian Serbs. UNPROFOR would seek cover when fired at, like everyone else. It was up to the warring factions to treat Srebrenica as a safe area for the population in the enclave.¹⁷

In May 1993, UN Resolution 836 which dealt with the fulfilment of the UNPROFOR mandate was passed. The crucial point of this resolution was, however, that it was aimed at deterring attacks on safe areas, rather than resisting such attacks. The former legal advisor at the United Nations Peace Forces in Zagreb, Gary F. Collins, and Dutch Lieutenant Colonel Joost van Duurling, concluded that Resolution 836 allowed for the use of force with the weapons available on the ground and Close Air Support (CAS), but both capabilities were to be used only in self defence of the UN troops. Protection of the population could not be included in the concept of self defence, according to Collins and Duurling.¹⁸ Yet, this position was not in line with the political interpretation given to self defence. The purpose of the mandate was to allow for the delivery of humanitarian aid and to promote the peace process. This meant that facilitating the

humanitarian aid or the protection of the safe areas could conflict with each other because of the limited manpower and also in view of the limited resources available to UNPROFOR.

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali concurred that indeed his vision was to protect the population, rather than the territory.¹⁹ However, due to the nature and configuration of the territory, the protection of the population in Srebrenica was closely connected to the occupation of territory. Srebrenica lay in a valley which was surrounded by hills and high ground. Protection of the people meant occupation of the high ground.

In order to make adequate preparation for its mission to Srebrenica, Dutchbat was established on October 3rd, 1994. Eighty different units from the Armed Forces sent personnel to the 13th infantry battalion from the 11th airmobile brigade to form Dutchbat.²⁰ During an eleven week preparation period, the battalion went through a rigorous training program. During the final exercise *Noble Falcon* in Germany, Dutchbat was put to the test. Some heated discussions took place between Karremans and the exercise leader. Karremans had resisted some criticism that the head of the brigades operations branch, leading the exercise, Major P.J.M. van Uhm, made about his style of command. Karremans seemed unable to accept the criticism and interpret it as constructive advice.²¹ Although the battalion's preparation was far from ideal, in the end Karremans believed that, all things considered, he left for Srebrenica with a well-trained battalion.²²

Understanding the relationship between Karremans and his second in command in Srebrenica, Major Robert Franken, is important in order to gain a better perspective on some of the issues Dutchbat had to confront. Karremans was mainly focused on analysing the situation and reporting to the higher chain of command, while Franken was in charge of leading

Dutchbats' daily activities. Karremans and Franken allocated the tasks and they decided every evening about who would do what. Their decisions were announced by Karremans at the staff meeting. Karremans kept all contact with the world outside the enclave; he read the reports to the higher UN chain of command (Tuzla and Sarajevo) as well as reports to The Hague and interacted with the press. The Netherlands Army doctrine says the following about the role of the commander:

In so far the operational conditions permit [the commander] must see and be seen; his staff must not form a barrier between himself and the troops. (...). An interest in the person behind the soldier and in the working of his mind allows the commander to assess the readiness of the unit and in particular, the morale of the troops.²³

However, because Major Franken was in charge of leading Dutchbats' daily activities, as a result of the arrangement with Karremans, it was he and not Karremans, who had the greater visibility in the battalion. Therefore, it was unclear whether the commander or his deputy was in charge of the battalion. Mainly during the fall of the enclave there was a perception that operational command was in the hands of deputy battalion commander Franken and that he was also more capable from an operational point of view. Franken remained calm and in control during the most stressful events of 1995. In an interview with NIOD researchers, Franken stated that a battalion commander could not be everywhere, and that Karremans should not have tried to do so. In his view the commander was supposed to stay at the centre of the web and retain an overall view of the operation. Franken emphasised, however, that there was only one commander, and that was Karremans.²⁴

A staff Non Commissioned Officer (NCO) even stated that the battalion HQ had been a 'one man band,' in the person of Franken. That was not as it ought to have been, but the NCO believed it was a good thing Franken was there because Karremans had not displayed adequate leadership.²⁵

On January 18th, 1995, Karremans and his battalion took over the responsibility for the safe area. Dutchbats' mission was to safeguard the enclave against hostilities, to protect the population through its presence, to demilitarize the Muslims, and to create conditions in which humanitarian relief could be provided.²⁶ Dutchbat took over two compounds. One of these compounds was located in Potocari, a town in the North of the enclave where Charley-company, the support company, and the battalion staff were located. The other compound was in Srebrenica, this was the location of Bravo-company. In and around Srebrenica and Potocari there were 14 observation posts (OPs)--a number that changed over time--from which Dutchbat monitored some 50 kilometres of enclave boundaries (see annex A).²⁷

Since the very beginning, Dutchbats' mission was severely hampered by the Bosnian Serbs' policy to minimize logistical support to the battalion and the enclave itself.²⁸ On February 18th, the last fuel convoy reached Dutchbat and from May on fresh food would also become a luxury--the soldiers ate primarily combat rations. On April 26th, a group of 180 soldiers were not allowed to go back to Srebrenica after they returned from their leave. From then on, Dutchbat had approximately 430 soldiers in the enclave of which 280 had some sort of supporting function.

Karremans reported several times on the consequences that the fuel shortage had on the execution of the mission.²⁹ He even analyzed the possibility of abandoning all the OPs, although this was not an option because it would, in Karremans' opinion, also mean the end of his

mission. He believed also, correctly so as it later turned out, that in case of a withdrawal from the OPs, the retreating OP crews would be met with some heavy ABiH (Bosnian Army) resistance. As a result of the lack of fuel and other important supplies, at the end of June 1995, the French Force Commander, General Bernard Janvier, considered the UN unit in Srebrenica to be 'semi-operational'. Janvier reported to New York that this situation was 'bound to sap morale as soldiers increasingly asked: "Why are we here when we are prevented from doing our jobs effectively?"'³⁰

Another limitation for Dutchbat was its inability to access reliable intelligence. In June 1994, the information perception of the then Dutchbat I commander, was one of a 'poor' intelligence picture. Karremans' predecessor had reported that he needed an extra intelligence officer. As a result, Dutchbat III had an extra intelligence officer within its organisation. Military and political leaders had little or no interest in the intelligence position. This became very clear when the United States, which also had trouble in establishing a clear intelligence picture in Eastern Bosnia, offered on several occasions to smuggle *Comint*-suitcases into the enclave. In those suitcases, there was equipment that would enable U.S. intelligence agencies to listen in on VRS (Bosnian Serb Army) and ABiH walkie-talkies communications. In exchange, the Americans would provide the Dutch with the information that was collected. The Dutch army leadership refused the offer because it was risky and did not adhere to UN policy.³¹ As a result, Dutchbat had to rely on its own intelligence collection capacity.

Among his resources, Karremans had a platoon of Dutch Special Forces (Commandos) from the Netherlands Army and, from February on, three Joint Commission Observers (JCOs) from the United Kingdom. The JCOs were Special Forces that worked for, and reported directly

to, the commander of UNPROFOR. Their mission in Srebrenica remained unknown to Dutchbat.³² Karremans' predecessors had used the commandos to patrol outside the enclave border and report about the situation there. Karremans allowed the Commandos only to execute patrols inside the enclave.

The relationship between the JCOs and the battalion staff was poor. Karremans was concerned that the JCOs independent movement in or outside the enclave would provoke the VRS into hostile actions. Therefore, he allowed the JCOs only to execute patrols in the presence of the Dutch commandos. As a result of this overly cautious use of Special Forces, another important source for intelligence collection was his civil military affairs section, section five. This section had regular contact with Civilians, military, and NGOs in the enclave. In retrospect, the section five officers admitted that during their preparation for the mission they had no clue what their mission was. Once in Srebrenica, they continued the work of their predecessors from Dutchbat II; over time their efforts to work with civilian and military authorities were severely hampered by their poor assets. This put a strain on their relationship with the civil and military authorities, as well as NGOs.³³

The final source for intelligence collection was the soldier. The rules for social contact with the civilian population in the Dutch battalions were restrictive. In the case of Dutchbat I, there was still a degree of flexibility, but by the time Dutchbat III deployed this had changed; no one could leave the gate at will, and certainly no one was permitted to leave alone. Soldiers on patrol were also forbidden to have contact with the local population.³⁴ Due to this restrictive policy, Dutchbats' soldiers were never of great importance for intelligence collection. Overall, the intelligence position of the battalion was limited.³⁵

In the enclave three primary groups were present. First, there were some 5,000 soldiers from the ABiH. Second, there was the original population of Srebrenica—which included some 10,000 people, and finally, there were around 22,000 – 25,000 refugees from other areas who had fled to the enclave earlier. All together, about 40,000 persons lived in the enclave.³⁶

Although Karremans' personal interaction with the local population was limited, he was sympathetic towards them. Karremans exemplified this sympathetic attitude in the way he dealt with food shortages in the enclave. Surplus food from Karremans' battalion was taken, packed, and then sent to those most in need in the enclave. As a veteran of the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon, Karremans was also very supportive of humanitarian projects and understood that the blue helmets had to gain the confidence of the population.³⁷ However, the battalions' increased logistical limitations, the result of Bosnian Serbs' policy to minimize Dutchbats' logistical support, made humanitarian projects impossible beginning in March 1995. This decrease of humanitarian projects also limited the interaction with the local population.

When Karremans took over command of the enclave, he was immediately confronted with his first crisis, not with the Bosnian-Serbs, but with the ABiH. This crisis would be referred to as the Bandera crisis. The crisis was about Freedom Of Movement (FOM) into an area South West of the enclave, known as the Bandera triangle. From January 12th, Dutchbat patrols were denied access into this area. After consulting with his higher command, Karremans ordered three patrols into the Bandera Triangle in order to re-establish FOM. All the patrols were stopped and the ABiH even took ninety Dutch soldiers hostage for three days. When the Bandera crisis ended on February 1st, Dutchbats' FOM to this area in the South West of the enclave was permanently lost. Karremans was glad that the crisis ended without bloodshed,

although he was very disappointed in the local military and civilian authorities. As a result, Dutchbat's initial relationship with the Muslim military leaders was very uneasy.³⁸ Karremans reported the incident to his higher headquarters and asked for mediation on a higher level with ABiH military leadership. With FOM lost in certain areas in the enclave, Dutchbat was limited in the execution of its mission.³⁹

When in the following months the Bosnian Serbs imposed many restrictions on the use of roads, supplies, and rotations, the ABiH and the Muslim population behaved regularly in such a way that they provoked hostile actions from the Bosnian-Serbs. This in turn had also repercussions for Dutchbat and that resulted in a growing mistrust and antipathy towards the Muslims among the peacekeepers.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the Dutch soldiers who occupied the OPs saw Muslim soldiers regularly cross the enclave border.⁴¹ They smuggled goods and sometimes they attacked villages, burned the Bosnian Serbs' houses, killed civilians, and stole food. These trips out of the enclave undermined the concept of the safe area. A Dutch peacekeeper remembered that a Muslim soldier showed him a necklace with pieces of human ears attached to it; the soldier told him they were Serb ears.⁴² Incidents like this caused the Dutch to develop a negative perception of the Muslim population. The Dutch expected that they would be protecting only poor refugees in the enclave, but they eventually realized that this was not the case.

For the protection of the enclave and its refugees, Karremans relied on air support. An important event that would affect this reliance on air support, was the hostage crisis that followed the NATO bombings on May 25th and 26th. During these two days, NATO airplanes bombed ammunition storage sites near Pale. As a reaction, the Bosnian Serbs took between three and four hundred hostages and attacked British and Ukrainian peacekeepers in the safe areas of

Gorazde and Zepa. On May 28th, the Bosnian Serbs took the soldiers of two British OPs hostage and occupied the OPs themselves. To prevent the loss of more personnel on the OPs, the British hastily abandoned 6 other OPs and moved to Gorazde. In the process, they lost several Armoured Personal Carriers (APCs), hundreds of uniforms, and other UN material. In Zepa, the Ukrainians were forced to stay in their OPs and lost their freedom of movement.⁴³

As a consequence of the deteriorating situation in Gorazde and Zepa, Karremans was ordered to abandon his most vulnerable OPs on two occasions. Yet, he refused to do so. The first time he received the order was on the evening of May 28th, the second time was in the early morning of May 29th. After a consultation with the UNPROFOR HQ in Sarajevo, the order was changed. Karremans was allowed to let his men stay in the Ops, but he had to make preparations to abandon them within an hour.⁴⁴ Furthermore, he was ordered not to take unnecessary risk and that UN lives were not to be jeopardized.⁴⁵

After the air strikes near Pale on May 25th and 26th, UNPROFOR was paralyzed. Janvier wanted to avoid further confrontations and a further increase of the tension that could be caused by the use of CAS. Boutros-Ghali also saw how considerable the consequences of the use of air power were. Therefore, he decided that from then on he needed to be consulted personally before air strikes and CAS were authorized. As a result, the UN key for the use of air power was in the hands of the Secretary-General himself. Although personal authorization of Boutros Ghali might cause problems due to time pressure, Boutros-Ghali wanted to be involved. However, as a result of the hostage crisis, air strikes were no longer considered a viable option; CAS remained available to UN commanders on the ground.⁴⁶ General Cees Nicolai, the Dutch chief of staff of the Bosnia Herzegovina Command in Sarajevo, had at least two telephone conversations with

Karremans to inform him about the new policy with regard to air support; no airstrikes were permitted, and CAS was to be used only after the required criteria were met.⁴⁷

After Karremans refused the order to leave his most vulnerable OPs in the night of May 28/29th, he received new orders that allowed him to stay. On May 30th, May 31st, and June 1st, there were several meetings between Dutchbat and Bosnian-Serbs representatives. During these meetings, the VRS stated that they were concerned that OP-E might be attacked by the ABiH.⁴⁸ During a telephone conversation, VRS Colonel Vukota Vukovic, commander of the Skelani-brigade, told Karremans that the VRS was going to use the road near OP-E and as a result, Dutchbat had to withdraw its troops from the OP. Vukovic emphasized that the VRS had no hostile intentions; they were only protecting themselves against a possible aggression from the ABiH. Karremans was not impressed and reported his intensions to his higher headquarters; he decided to defend the OP and repositioned the Quick Reaction Force in order to deal with any possible threat.⁴⁹ Karremans made clear that he would respond with force to any VRS attempt to cross the enclave boarder.⁵⁰

On June 3rd, the VRS launched small attacks to force the Dutch to abandon OP-E. There was no resistance at all from the Dutch side, not from the troops in the OP or from the QRF that arrived and met the fleeing OP crew about one and a half kilometre behind the OP. Captain Groen, the company commander of Bravo Company, who had joined the QRF, moved forward with an APC in order to investigate how far VRS soldiers had moved into the enclave. He was followed by ABiH soldiers. When Groen wanted to turn his APC around, some 500 meters from OP-E, the ABiH soldiers, who had moved out of side through the woods alongside the APC, suddenly blocked the road and threatened to fire at Groen if he moved further backwards with his

APC. According to the ABiH, Dutchbat had to hold that position in order to prevent the VRS from moving further into the enclave. After some tense moments, the Dutch proposal to create a new OP on that same spot was approved by the ABiH.

During the 'attack' on OP-E, Karremans requested CAS, which was not in line with the new air support policy, so it was refused. After the incident, Karremans sent a situation report to his higher command in which he described the deteriorating situation in the enclave and Dutchbats' increasing operational limitations to deal with it. In addition, he also reported to the Netherlands--outside his regular chain of command--with the request to bring the worsening situation to the attention of the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs.⁵¹ The incident further worsened the relationship between Dutchbat and the ABiH. The ABiH started to distrust Dutchbat more and more.⁵²

Karremans' mission was also to demilitarize the enclave. In order to comply with this part of the mission, Dutchbat had to confiscate the weapons from the Muslims. Muslims who openly carried weapons risked losing them. Karremans had complained that he needed a mandate change in order to follow armed individuals into their houses as well. Now Dutchbat and the ABiH were playing hide and seek and it was a constant strain on the relation with the Muslims. After the OP-E crisis, the situation between the Serbs and Muslims worsened rapidly. Karremans reported on numerous occasions that if it came to a fight in the enclave, Dutchbat was not capable of defending it, and so what was he supposed to do if the enclave was attacked? Hence, with the increasing tension between the VRS and the ABiH, which Dutchbat was unable to stop from getting worse, fighting between them became more open.

Karremans was in no position to deny the Muslims the right to defend themselves, since he obviously could not.⁵³ He allowed the Muslims to carry their weapons more openly and agreed to return the heavy weapons to the ABiH once a massive ground attack by the VRS commenced.⁵⁴ Karremans informed his HQ in Tuzla about this decision and this headquarters concurred as long as the Muslims used their weapons only in self-defence⁵⁵. A new situation now existed: Muslims were reinforcing and extending their trenches and other defensive positions between and around the OPs on the border of the enclave in order to stop a possible Serb attack.

The VRS attack on ABiH positions in the proximity of OP-F started July 6th, 1995, (see annex B, Chronology of most important events January – July 1995). Mortars and tanks were fired at the ABiH positions. In the process, OP-F was hit twice and there was some considerable damage to the watchtower of the OP. The question is whether or not this was done deliberately to destroy the Dutch TOW anti tank system. Dutchbat had six TOW (range 3000m) and eighteen Dragon (range 1000m) anti tank firing systems in the enclave. Both systems had become highly unreliable due to poor maintenance. The Dutch Ministry of Defence had given the order not to use the TOW systems because the risk that they would misfire or explode was high, but the Dragons could still be used.⁵⁶ The battalion also had AT-4 (range 400m) anti tank systems in the enclave. The rounds that impacted on the watchtower provided Karremans with a good justification to request an air strike on multiple targets, instead of limited CAS because he was afraid that VRS would retaliate with artillery. Dutchbat was in no position to prevent retaliation from outside the enclave with artillery or rockets. In the days to come, Karremans' position on how to answer VRS aggression with an air strike instead of CAS would not change.⁵⁷ In a

telephone conversation with Karremans, General Nicolai again informed him of the fact that an attack on an OP did not justify an air strike as long as its soldiers still could safely withdraw. A ground commander could only ask CAS on targets that were actually firing on UNPROFOR forces.⁵⁸ On July 7th, there was a lull in the battle and Karremans reported on the situation. In this report he urgently asked for assistance by ground and air.⁵⁹

On July 8th, the fighting continued. When OP-F was hit by shells from a tank, Karremans requested CAS for the second time. Again, the request was denied.⁶⁰ As the fighting closed in on OP-F, the OP leader requested permission to abandon the OP. Permission to do so was denied by Franken. Fighting continued and a Serb tank broke through the ABiH lines some 100 meters from the OP. Then, two more tanks showed up and they were used to breach the safety wall around the OP. During these hectic moments, Franken was reported to have given the order to open fire upon the tanks with TOW missiles.⁶¹ This order, however, was not executed. Finally, the VRS tried to attract Dutch attention by shouting toward the OP crew and by waving a white flag. Dutch and VRS soldiers then had a short meeting that resulted in Dutch abandonment of the OP. After their retreat in an APC, the Dutch were blocked by the ABiH some 200 meters behind the OP. The situation between the ABiH and the Dutch was very tense because the ABiH did not want Dutchbat to leave the OP. The OP commander then requested permission to force his way through the roadblock. Permission was given and when the APC passed the ABiH soldiers, one of the Dutch soldiers was fired upon by an ABiH soldier with a shotgun. As a result the Dutch soldier died from a head wound.⁶²

The incident at OP-F and the tense situation after the Dutch left the OP and were confronted with the ABiH was broadcasted on the battalions' radio net. This was an all informed

net so all the other OPs were aware of the events. The death of a Dutch soldier killed by a Muslim had a negative impact on the battalion and the soldiers at the OPs. That same evening OP-U was also abandoned by the Dutch. OP-U commander, Sergeant J.A.J. van Eck, choose to move into VRS territory because he did not trust the ABiH soldiers behind the OP. Sergeant van Eck also was present when the VRS took OP-E on June 3rd. Since then, he had asked for more specific orders as what to do when an OP would be attacked by the VRS. There were no instructions for such a possibility. The answer he was given prior by the battalion staff was that when the VRS would cross the enclave border he should fire over the heads of the VRS soldiers and if that did not work he should aim and fire at them directly. Thus, considering the overwhelming force of the VRS this would mean suicide. This dilemma was recognized by the battalion staff earlier on and the OP commanders received the order that they had to deal with the situation as they saw fit.⁶³ The safety of the Dutch soldiers should be leading in their decisions.⁶⁴

On July 9th, OPs S (surrenders to VRS), M (held hostage by ABiH), D (held hostage by ABiH) and K (surrender to VRS) were abandoned. Sgt Bos, who was sent on a reconnaissance mission in an APC to the Swedish Shelter Project, was suddenly surrounded and taken hostage by the VRS as well. During the afternoon, Karremans received orders to establish a blocking position in order to prevent the VRS from moving further into the enclave to Srebrenica. During a telephone conversation with Colonel Charles Brantz, the second in command at the headquarters sector North East, Karremans voiced his worries that the VRS might be interested in more than just the southern part of the enclave. Brantz agreed and both thought, for the first time, that the VRS might have an interest in taking the whole enclave.⁶⁵ At the same time, Dutch Minister of Defence, Joris Voorhoeve, explained on Dutch TV that CAS had been requested

twice on July 9th. Voorhoeve considered the use of CAS unavoidable; however, the safety of the Dutch soldiers had priority. The order issued to the commanders by Voorhoeve was to avoid bloodshed. He stated, 'I want every man and woman to come home safely.'⁶⁶ It is striking that on the day that Karremans had not requested CAS because he was afraid for the safety of the hostages, higher headquarters was initiating CAS for Srebrenica.⁶⁷ Yashusi Akashi, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for the former Yugoslavia, however did not approve the initiative from Sarajevo.⁶⁸

The order for the blocking position to prevent any VRS movement into Srebrenica itself was controversial in the eyes of Karremans.⁶⁹ He had reported many times that his battalion was not in a position to defend the enclave so he was astonished that this was the order he received. After analysing this mission, he reported back to Nicolai that this assignment was still unfeasible but that he would execute it as ordered. He did not ask for any clarification on how to execute this mission or when to open fire, nor was there any change in the Rules of Engagement given to Karremans.⁷⁰ General Nicolai further explained to Karremans that Dutchbat needed to use small arms fire to stop the VRS from moving into Srebrenica. This would convince higher headquarters of the necessity to support him with CAS.⁷¹ Karremans, on his turn, ordered his battalion reserve to be placed under the command of Captain Groen. Karremans gave Captain Groen the order to establish a blocking position to prevent a VRS move into the city. Karremans explained that the blocking position was supposed to be a 'line in the sand' that should not be crossed by the VRS.⁷² Major Franken sent a fax to Captain Groen with the written order for the blocking position.⁷³ On the morning of July 10th, some form of a blocking position was indeed established.

After receipt of the order, Captain Groen also thought that the mission was not a feasible one. Groen and Franken had an additional conversation over the phone during which Franken clearly explained the order to Groen again. Franken told Groen that this was a "serious green mission," instead of the regular blue UN-appearance.⁷⁴ On the mission that Groen had to execute there was no misunderstanding.⁷⁵ Groen, who still thought the mission as formulated was unrealistic, changed the intent of the mission. In Dutch military orders, the intent of the commander is the main element. The subordinate has freedom to fill in how he will execute the mission as long as it achieves the intent of his commander. Groen's main effort was not, as intended by Karremans, stopping the VRS by the use of force, but protecting the population through presence. Groen struggled with the neutral position of Dutchbat. If Dutchbat would fight openly at the side of the ABiH, in his view, neutrality would be lost and Dutchbats' primary mission--protection of the population--would be endangered. Groen thought he could realize his mission by positioning the blocking position between the population and the VRS. Groen briefed his subordinates accordingly. The main goal of the mission was prevention of escalation in order to deescalate the conflict. Furthermore, in addition to the blocking position, the VRS aggression would be stopped by a massive air strike that morning.⁷⁶

During the day Karremans once more, although still worried for the safety of the hostages, requested CAS. Fighting between VRS and ABiH continued. Dutch troops constantly tried to position themselves in front of the VRS in order to keep an eye on the forward edge of the battlefield and VRS movement. During the day, Dutch soldiers were constantly harassed by VRS fires, although none of them got seriously wounded. The continued assurance on the part of the Bosnian Serbs that they did not want to exploit the vulnerability of the UNPROFOR

soldiers appeared consistent with the reality.⁷⁷ At the end of the day, the VRS had made good progress and threatened to overrun a part of the blocking position. Groen had ordered his men only to fire directly at the VRS troops if or when they actually fired upon the Dutch troops. Before the dilemma of opening fire on VRS soldiers presented itself to the troops, the VRS halted its attack. In the meantime, Karremans had requested CAS for the fourth time. During that evening, the Dutch minister of Defence Voorhoeve, was asked if he agreed with the use of CAS in order to stop the VRS advance into the enclave because this could jeopardize the lives of the Dutch hostages. Voorhoeve answered that due to the need to protect the population of the enclave he was not in the position to say no.⁷⁸

In the morning of July 11th, everybody in the enclave was looking at the sky in anticipation of the air strike that would attack some 40 VRS targets in and close to the enclave. During the night, Karremans received information that General Janvier and Akashi had finally approved his air strike request, which was not true. There was a fatal miscommunication between General Nicolai, Colonel Brantz, and Karremans, which resulted in Karremans' belief that an air strike was imminent.⁷⁹ Karremans communicated this scheduled air strike to the battalion and to the Muslim civil and military authorities. Yet, as the air strikes were not carried out the situation deteriorated rapidly during the remainder of the day. After the VRS continued their advance towards Srebrenica, Franken ordered 'weapons free,' fire at will, at 11.17 in order to halt the VRS move towards the city.⁸⁰ The soldiers in the blocking position did not execute this order. It is unclear why, during this period there was a temporarily loss of communications. Karremans requested CAS for the fifth and sixth time. Finally, Janvier and Akashi approved the request. At 14.47 two Dutch F-16s provided some limited CAS. After VRS threatened to kill all

the Dutch hostages and to shell the enclave, HQ Sarajevo decided not to continue with CAS. The VRS continued to move towards Srebrenica while the ABiH was no longer resisting. This resulted in the final order from Captain Groen at around 15.00 to abandon the compound in Srebrenica. He ordered four APCs as a buffer between the refugees and the VRS during their move to Protocari. Srebrenica was lost, marking the beginning of the end.

Karremans' decisions in relation to the moral and ethical framework

The first question we have to answer in relation to the framework is: Did Karremans recognise the ethical problem he was faced with?

In a situation in which the level of violence is such that military leaders deployed in a peace operation can no longer accomplish their mission, they should always bear in mind the purpose of their deployment. If they cannot perform the neutral monitoring role they have been assigned at the beginning of the mission, they should look at what type of role they have performed as a result of their deployment. If their mission is unachievable, but the purpose of their deployment is to provide protection to refugees, they should focus on the purpose of their deployment and understand that that purpose has taken priority above the mission.⁸¹

When analysing this quote of Dr Paolo Tripodi, holder of the Ethics and Leadership Chair at the Marine Corps University, I have come to the conclusion that Karremans, despite many mitigating circumstances, probably did not immediately recognize the moral and ethical problems that were at hand. One element of Karremans' mission, protecting the population through Dutchbat presence, was certainly no longer feasible. To resist the VRSs' contempt for the UN peacekeepers and their mission, UN presence by itself no longer seemed enough to deter the VRS. Dutchbat by itself had to give a stronger signal.

Karremans' failure to recognize the ethical dilemma may have been the result of a lack of information. After the VRS occupied OP-E on June 3rd, the situation in the enclave remained tense. Karremans and the UN HQs in Sarajevo and Zagreb had no more than a suspicion that the VRS might have the intention of attacking the southern part of the enclave. Karremans or his

colleagues in the UN HQs had no idea that the VRS intended to occupy the whole enclave. They all missed the signals that something of importance was bound to happen. This was a consequence of an overall bad intelligence position of national and international intelligence agencies and Dutchbat. It was unclear, until the evening of July 9th, what the actual intentions of the VRS were.

From July 9th, it became clear that the goal of the VRS might be to occupy the whole enclave. Based on this assumption, Karremans was given the order to establish a blocking position and stop any VRS movement into the town of Srebrenica. Karremans however, had reported on several occasions that Dutchbat would not be capable of defending the enclave if the VRS were determined to take it. He believed that VRS aggression could only be stopped by a massive air strike on multiple targets in order to prevent retaliation with artillery or rockets. After he received the order for the blocking position, Karremans was well aware of his dilemma that if the VRS would advance, Dutchbat in itself would not be capable of stopping them. By then he was also aware of the possible consequences that this attack would have on his mission to protect the population of Srebrenica. There is no indication, however, that he knew what would be the faith of the Muslim males.

The failure to see an ethical dilemma can also be influenced by a strong prejudice. Karremans remained of the opinion that Dutchbat was only capable of executing its mission if the VRS and ABiH were in agreement. Dutchbat was a neutral player. Karremans reported on numerous occasions that Dutchbat could not defend the enclave. In his book, *Srebrenica Who Cares?*, Karremans stated that, "the order to defend the southern edge of the city Srebrenica has convinced me that someone's fuses must have been blown up."⁸² The narrow-mindedness in

relation to Dutchbats' own defensive capabilities strongly influenced the behaviour of many Dutchbat soldiers and Karremans was no exception. Dutchbat was in no position to put up a fight without the proper air power to protect itself. Karremans communicated a firm standpoint on any hostile intention that the VRS might undertake against OP-E, but he and his men failed to break out of the peacekeeping prejudice in their heads when the use of force was required. The same behaviour is seen throughout the whole crisis.

This line of prejudice was also very clear in the way Captain Groen acted throughout the crisis. Until the very end he saw neutrality of Dutchbat as the ultimate goal in order to protect the population effectively; he even jeopardized his own life and the lives of Dutch soldiers to do so. The use of force in order to stop the VRS from moving towards Srebrenica somehow just seemed not to be a valid option.

According to the presented framework, a third reason for not recognizing an ethical dilemma is because of external influence of ones beliefs. Even though the mission of Dutchbat was to protect the population, the role that the ABiH played in influencing this part of Dutchbats' mission during the crisis can not be underestimated. How Karremans thoughts might have been influenced and how the ABiH's role influenced his decision-making is difficult to say. In his book, Karremans stated that 'the members of Dutchbat were not seen as guests, they were taken hostage, fired upon, robbed, hindered to execute their mission, and even murdered.'⁸³ Although Karremans is not saying it directly, it is in my opinion clear that he is referring to the Muslims in general or the ABiH in particular. The perceived threat from the ABiH resulted in the surrender of several OPs to the VRS. After the Dutch soldier was killed by the ABiH and after Karremans received orders to safeguard the lives of the Dutch soldiers, Karremans' thoughts of protecting

the population were most likely secondary to his worries for his own soldiers, who were by now threatened from both sides.

The second question of the framework will now be addressed: Did Karremans fail to make the right decisions when faced with his dilemma to defend the enclave and did he fail to communicate his orders effectively? According to the NIOD researchers, Karremans did not make incorrect military decisions.⁸⁴ Because Karremans was mainly focused on analysing the situation and reporting to the higher chain of command, while Franken was in charge of leading Dutchbats' daily activities, it was Franken who was giving the orders on the radio when a crisis occurred. Over the course of the Bandera crises, Franken was in the area several times, and during the loss of OP-E, clear direct orders were issued. In both situations the orders did not result in the desired end state.

How did Karremans and his staff prepare for the crisis on OP-E? The hostage crisis in May showed clearly that higher HQ had no intention of protecting the OPs with air support. Did Karremans fail to understand this? In his situation reports, Karremans boldly stated that he would defend the OP, however this clear, firmly stated intention turned out to be a hollow phrase in the end.

During the fall of OP-F, the OP commander initially was not permitted to withdraw from his position. Karremans did not want to lose another OP and he continued to rely on air support. Once again the question remains: What would have happened if CAS was refused? There were no indications that higher HQ policy towards air support had changed. Was there a plan to defend the OP? Did they relocate anti tank weapons and personal to OP-F in order to defend it? There is no evidence that OP-F was reinforced in order to be defended though. Or did such a

plan not exist because of the higher HQ orders to take no unnecessary risks? In the midst of the crisis however, Franken gave an order to use the TOWs, but the OP commander decided differently.⁸⁵ The orders the OP commanders received to act as they thought necessary seemed not to have the intention of stopping the VRS from entering the enclave or taking over the OPs. These were clearly in line with the 'no unnecessary risk' order.

After receipt of the order to establish the blocking position, Karremans gave Captain Groen the order to execute this mission. The next day there was no effort made, either by Karremans or Franken to go out to the blocking position and instruct the troops who were positioned there. To change the nature of any mission (the green order) is an extreme challenge. In the case of Dutchbat, its mission changed from peace keeping to peace enforcing. Karremans should have understood the dilemma that the order to establish a blocking position would present to his men. Given the situation, Karremans must have known that this was Dutchbats' last chance to stop the VRS from advancing into Srebrenica. He knew that the mission he had given his soldiers would put them in harm's way. In order to verify whether his orders were executed as he intended, Karremans should have used some form of control. He also should have given moral support to his troops at the moment that they needed it the most.

The third question of the framework addresses the issue of unjust but convenient decisions. Did Karremans take decisions that were unjust but convenient? One could argue that he did in relation to his requests for air strikes. He knew that with the policy change of May 29th, the UN HQ would not support all requests for air support in case of the defence of an OP. So in order to defend an OP he had to rely on his own capabilities. A contingency plan on how to defend the OPs without air support seemed just not to have existed. Karremans probably did not

make a decision to defend the enclave because he was convinced he was not capable to do so.

Conclusions

The presented framework for analyses identifies skills that commanders need to possess to make adequate decisions when faced with ethical and moral dilemmas. In the case of Srebrenica, it became clear that these skills were affected by many external and internal factors. As a result, it was extremely difficult for Karremans to make the moral right decisions and to take appropriate action. In retrospect, however, I believe that Karremans did not take the correct moral and ethical approach as he decided not to defend the enclave during the attack on Srebrenica.

No one, including Dutchbat had seen the attack of the VRS coming, and as a result, no one recognized the potential for an ethical dilemma. After all the VRS had no bad intentions, had they? This failure to anticipate VRS intentions was influenced by the poor information available to Dutchbat. As a consequence, Dutchbat took a reactive instead of a proactive approach.

In my opinion, once the true intention of the VRS became clear, Karremans had to consider the possibility of sending the VRS a strong signal in order to prevent them from entering the enclave. This in spite of the fact that he believed that he was in no position to defend the enclave, although I am aware of the fact that armed resistance only could have been very limited and that it might have had many unforeseen and unwanted consequences.

The reluctance to use force was, in my view, the result of a strong prejudice that Dutchbat was in no position to defend the enclave and therefore needed to remain in a neutral position. This approach, however, compromised Dutchbats' ability to fight or plan for any form of defence. From June 3rd, after the loss of OP-E, the need for a contingency plan that did not rely

on air support was very evident. Karremans or any battalion commander in a similar position, should have war gamed contingency plans. The purpose of such plans, giving the VRS a clear military signal in case they decided to attack, could only have been limited. The weapon systems available to the battalion should have empowered Dutchbat to send such a clear military signal. Even without the policy change on air support, contingency planning in the case of foul weather should have been done.

Another factor that likely had a negative impact on Dutchbats' decision to confront the VRS was the gradual deterioration of the relationship between Dutchbat and the ABiH. This relationship, already poor, received a blow after a Dutch soldier was killed by a Muslim soldier. As a result, an atmosphere of distrust and even hostility between the ABiH and Dutchbat came about. Thus, Karremans and his troops were faced with two possibly hostile factions. This resulted in an inward focus and the safety of Dutchbat soldiers got priority over the mission.

Did Karremans communicate his decisions effectively in order to take appropriate action? Karremans orders were clear enough, but lacked execution according to the commanders' intent. Although Karremans remained loyal to his superiors, during the crisis Karremans did not show enough leadership when it was most needed. In situations where he asked a strong commitment from his troops he did not lead by example (green mission). He did not exercise supervision in situations where it was essential. Due to this failure his most crucial orders--the defence of OP-F and the establishment of the blocking position--were executed in a different way than what he intended.

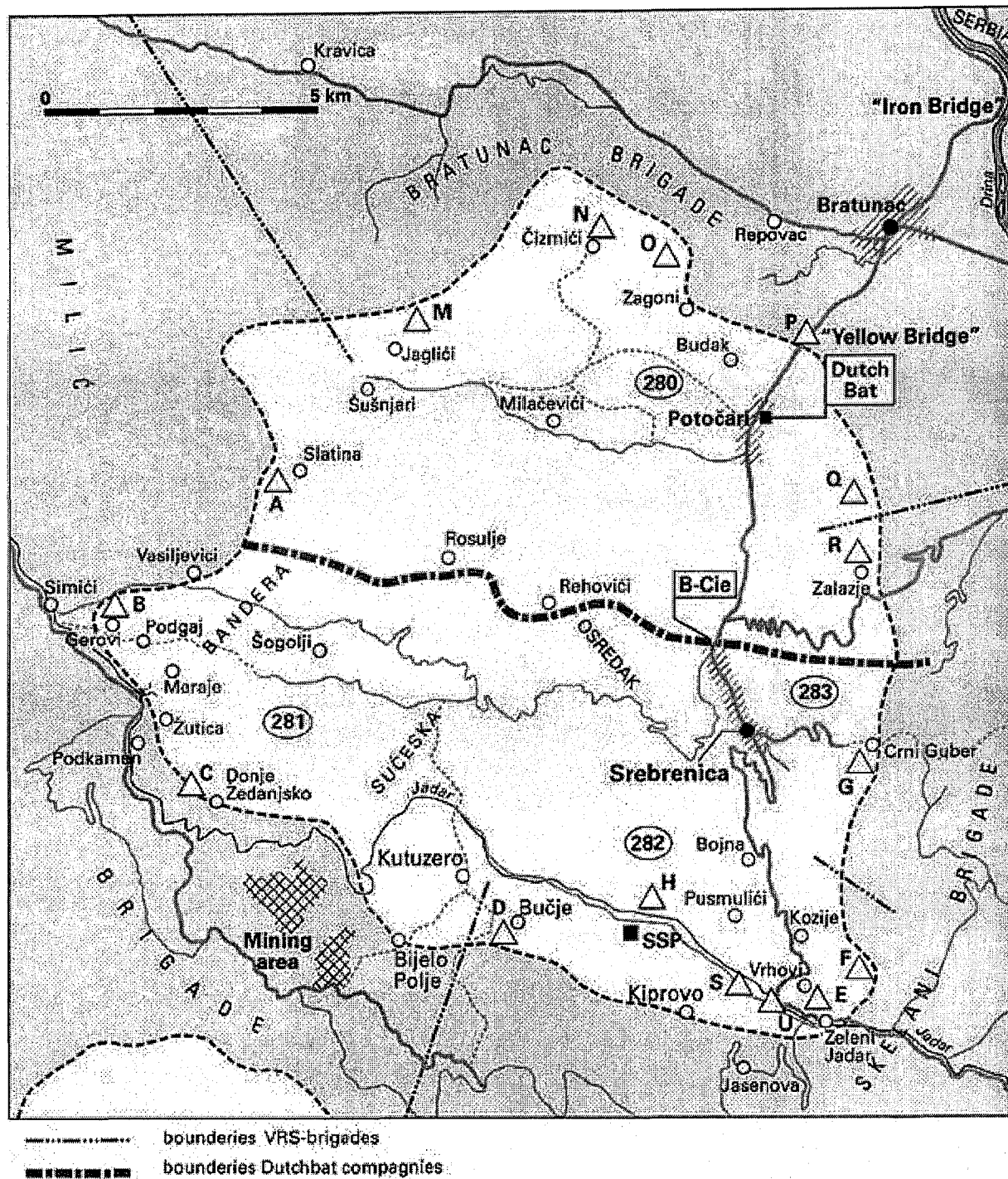
Did Karremans make decisions that were unjust but convenient? Karremans knew that with the policy change of May 29th, the UN HQ would not support all requests for air support in

case of the defence of an OP. So after the loss of OP-E, which confirmed the UN policy in relation to the protections of OPs, he must have known that if he wanted to defend the other OPs, he had to rely on his own resources. The decision to rely solely on air support was therefore ambivalent and resulted in inactivity with regard to the development of Dutchbats' contingency plans.

Although my conclusion is that Karremans did not take the correct moral and ethical approach when he decided not to defend the enclave, I want to emphasize that in hindsight, Karremans' position was typical of a moral dilemma. Had he fought and lost a hypothetical twenty soldiers, he might have prevented the mass murder of 7,500 Muslim men. For this prevention of a mass murder he would not have received much credit however, nobody would have known what he prevented. On the other hand he then probably would have been prosecuted for disobeying a direct order to abandon the OPs and consequently would have been held responsible for the death of his soldiers.

It remains extremely sour for the population of Srebrenica that four weeks after the fall of the enclave, the UN and NATO stopped the VRS aggression by initiating the air campaign, *Deliberate Force*. During this two-week air campaign, several hundred VRS targets all over Bosnia Herzegovina were destroyed, which forced the Bosnian Serbs to the negotiating table.

Annex A: The situation in Srebrenica June, 1995.⁸⁶



Annex B, Chronology of main events January – July 1995.

16 April 1993		Un resolution 819 declares Srebrenica as a "Safe Area."
June 4, 1993		UN resolution 836, the mandate for UNPROFOR.
January 11, 1995		Start of the Bandera triangle Crises.
	16.00-17.00	Fighting between ABiH and VRS Westside of the enclave.
January 12, 1995		ABiH stops a Dutch patrol.
January 18, 1995		Karremans takes over command.
January 24, 1995	11.00 and 12.30	Patrol with Franken is stopped. Also patrol near OP-C is stopped.
January 28, 1995		After consultations with higher HQ 3 patrols executed iot establish FOM in the Bandera Triangle, 100 Dutchbat soldiers held hostage for three days by Muslims.
February 1, 1995		Crisis ended, FOM lost! Very bad beginning for the relationship between Dutchbat III and ABiH. OP-B is lost to ABiH.
February 18, 1995		Last Fuel convoy reaches Srebrenica.
March 29, 1995		Dutch soldier Jeffrey Broere is killed by artillery fire in Simin Han.
April 26, 1995		Refusal Serbs to let 180 Dutch soldiers return to Srebrenica after their leave.
May 10, 1995	Letter nr 9565	Karremans informs Higher Echelon about consequences of fuel shortage.
May 10, 1995		Convoy arrives with 10,000 kg of porc meat. The meat cannot be kept because of fuel shortage.
May 18, 1995	Letter nr 9571	Karremans presents an analysis of withdrawal from OPs based on shortage of supplies and fuel.
May 22, 1995		Janvier briefs Security Council on his views on the safe areas, these ideas are not adopted. U.S. opposed his ideas and was not willing to give up the safe areas nor was it willing to sent troops.
May 25, 1995		Bombing by NATO of Pale.
May 26, 1995		Bombing and then Hostage crisis.
May 27, 1995		Attack of French OP post bridge Sarajevo, French counterattack and retake lost OP.
May 28, 1995		VSR attack on Gorazde, los of several UK and Ukraine OPs.
	15.00	Nicolai talks to Karremans about leaving some OPs. He also reports that CAS request need to be limited because of the danger of escalation.

	± 23.00	Karremans receives order to abandon OP-A, OP-B and OP-C. He refuses!
	± 24.00	Karremans talks again with Nicolai. BHC HQ had given the order to abandon 6 to 8 OPs. After a discussion a temporarily solution is found. OPs must prepare to leave on order within 1 hour after that call is made.
	Night	Karremans has a discussion with his Company cdrs. He give them new orders for the OP's and QRF. What to do when VSR wanted to capture an OP is no written order found.
May 29, 1995	Letter nr 9581	Karremans analysis why not to withdraw from the OPs.
	Morning	Karremans gets additional order with regards to the OPs.
	Afternoon	Franken has a meeting with AHIB and states that in case of a VSR attack he can defend the OPs max 72 hours.
	Afternoon	Karremans has a conversation with Lt Col de Ruiter reference the intentions of the VSR. They also discuss the situation in Gorazde and Zepa.
May 29, 1995		New UN policy with regards to Airstrikes and CAS.
May 30, 1995		Section 5 has a meeting with Serbs. They warn for AHIB aggression towards the OPs. In Gorazde two more OPs are taken over by the VSR
May 31, 1995		Preparations by capt Groen to strengthen OP-E. Figthing in vicinity of OP-E and some others between VSR and AHIB.
May 31, 1995	Letter nr 9584	Karremans reports on a possible attack on OP-E and what he will do about it.
June 1, 1995		Karremans has a meeting with Serbs by phone from OP-E. No reasons for worry he had said. The Serbs had demanded that the OP would be abandoned.
June 2, 1995		O'Grady shot down by Serb anti air.
June 2, 1995	Evening	VSR fires fifteen times on OP-E.
June 3, 1995		Serb attack on OP-E, OP is abandoned by Dutch. Groen in his APC is more or less taken hostage by AHIB 500 m North of OP-E. This crisis is solved and Dutch create a new OP-U on this location. Karremans requested CAS.
June 3, 1995	11.00	APC of Dutchbat in Simin Han fired upon and hit by a VSR anti-tank rocket. 2 heavily wounded soldiers.

June 4, 1995	Letter nr 9588	Karremans reports on the deteriorating situation in Srebrenica to higher HQ.
June 5, 1995	Letter nr 9589	Karremans reports to NL the deteriorating situation in Srebrenica.
June 7, 1995		Convoy UNHCR with 72 tons of food for the population.
June 8, 1995		Karremans reports that an attack on the enclave might be a possibility.
June 9, 1995		Start of debriefing in theater.
June 12, 1995		Couzy takes the decision that the people on leave will not return to Srebrenica anymore, 430 persons remain in enclave.
June 17, 1995	Letter nr 9597	Karremans reports to Chief of the Dutch Army the Logistical and personal situation.
June 20, 1995		Some fuel arrives, UNHCR convoy arrives.
June 27, 1995		UNHCR convoy with food arrives.
June 29, 1995	Letter nr 95105	Karremans informs higher HQ again about the situation within the Battalion in Srebrenica.
July 5, 1995		Troop movements are seen though not interpreted as a sign for the upcoming assault.
July 6, 1995		26 people can leave Srebrenica.
Thursday, July 6, 1995	05.00 – 13.00	Serb shelling trenches in vicinity OP-F, Sgt van Rossum.
	13.00 – 19.00	Serb shelling (tank) of OP-F itself.
	13.50	Dutch CAS request. Karremans vision of CAS was that of an airstrike. Multiple targets to prevent retaliation with artillery by the Serbs. This was not higher HQ policy.
		Request to leave OP-F denied.
	Hole day	Ad random shelling of the enclave, over 150.
Friday, July 7, 1995		Rain and mist no shelling.
		No shelling of the enclave.
	Letter nr 95112	Karremans informs higher HQ about the deteriorating situation and ask support by ground and air.
		Karremans reports that he thinks the meaning of the shelling was to intimidate UN and population.
Saturday, July 8, 1995	11.25	Continuation of Serb shelling trenches in vicinity of OP-F.
		Request to leave the OP denied. Franken orders OP-F to use TOW to destroy tank.
	13.00	CAS request.

	14.00	Serb shelling (tank) of OP-F itself.
	14.10	OP-F hit and outbreak of panic in OP-F.
	14.20	request to leave OP-F granted.
	14.30-15.00	Serbs at OP-F take Dutch equipment.
	15.20	OP-F abandoned by Dutch.
	15.52-16.35	Airplanes arrive to intimidate Serbs. Air presence.
	± 16.00	Muslims shoot at Dutch APC after leaving OP-F, Dutch soldier killed as result of this incident.
	17.00	Groen order two APC to find new frontline, Lt Egbers moves forward and finds Muslim soldiers. They throw two hand grenades after which APC moves back to compound.
	18.30-19.00	OP-U surrounded by Serb troops, the soldiers leave voluntarily (first 6 hostages) for Serb territory instead of trying to make it back to Srebrenica because of the Muslim threat.
	19.00	Groen orders FAC (engine failure) to hilltop, later he orders two APC to do the same, Lt Egbers. They move West of Srebrenica on the Bluff and this position is known as bravo 1 (blocking position).
	± 20.00	Sitrep by Sgt van Eck from behind Serb lines. Groen is surprised to learn the strength of the Serb forces.
	Hole day	Ad random shelling of the enclave, over 200.
	Letter nr 95113	Karremans informs higher HQ about the deteriorating situation in Srebrenica.
Sunday, July 9, 1995		
	08.15	Aircraft above the enclave. Karremans don't want them now. He is afraid for his hostages. Also is there no authorization to attack. Cynical that by now Sarajevo preps CAS while Karremans has not requested CAS.
		Refugees from the South and the Swedish Shelter Project move into Srebrenica town, since the night before some 3,000.
	Hole day	Ad random shelling of the enclave.
	08.30	Lt Egbers with two APC and sgt Bos with one APC are parked in a hairpin turn to observe the road approach to Srebrenica. Show the flag.
	08.45 – 09.15	OP-S taken by Serb troops, Sgt Bresser chose to move behind Serb lines instead of moving back to Srebrenica. He was afraid of the Muslims. Franken said the next day that he did not want to have a new

		OP-S story.
	11.56	Karremans sent his assessment, Serbs want to secure southern part of the safe area, and possibly they will take the rest of the safe area later as well. This is not an eminent threat, however. No single attacks but only a massive airstrike can stop the Serbs by now.
	13.00 – 13.30	Sgt Bos is sent forward to find the new frontline. He is surrounded by Serbs near the Swedish Shelter Project. He surrenders and by now the Serbs have 20 Dutch hostages.
	14.00	OP-K and OP-D report that the fighting is moving past them. The Serbs were advancing around both OPs.
	15.00	Serb shells explode 100 yards from OP-K and at the same time also near OP-M. Karremans did not request CAS at this time. Nicolai had explained to Karremans the new guidelines for CAS and the defense of the OPs.
	16.30	OP-M abandoned by Dutch, they move back 200 yards and are more or less held hostage by AHIB.
	16.30	OP-D and OP-K may be abandoned as the soldiers see fit.
	±17.00	Serbs pass Bibici and are not stopped by AHIB. The road to Srebrenica from the south is wide open. Karremans and Col Brantz think for the first time that the Serbs might want to take the whole safe area.
	17.50	Nicolai calls the Bosnian Serbs that a blocking position will be established and that an attack by the Serbs will be followed by NATO CAS.
	18.15	OP-D is abandoned, troops move to Muslim lines and are stopped by Muslims and are taken hostage.
	18.30	OP-K is surrounded and Dutch surrender to Serbs. Serbs now have 30 Dutch soldiers taken hostage.
	19.30	Nicolai calls again.
		Nicolai calls Karremans to talk about the order of the blocking position. They talk about the CAS rules and the reason for the blocking position. First small arms fire before CAS can be requested. Use some of your Anti Tank weapons. Miscommunication? Karremans believes that the next morning massive air attacks will follow. Nicolai only thinks CAS will follow if the blocking

		position is attacked.
	20.30	Groen hears that at 21.00 airstrikes will be executed. Again was this a request initiated from outside the battalion. The request was stopped in Sarajevo.
	21.00	No Airstrike!
	22.00 Fax	Written order for the Blocking Position.
Monday, July 10, 1995		
	Morning	Dutchbat can see the VSR attack into the enclave. House after house is set ablaze.
	06.50	Muslim counterattack to the South.
	07.00	Three of the four Blocking positions in position. In total 6 APC and 60 men. Capt Hageman is overall cdr of the four blocking positions. Capt Groen remained in Compound Srebrenica.
	07.15	Explosion at position Bravo four, south road, and one APC is stuck on the side off the road, The other APC and troops return to compound. In fact it was a Serb tank and not a Muslim hand grenade that caused the explosion (so they were under attack).
	08.00	Heavy shelling of Srebrenica.
	Hole day	Ad random shelling of the enclave.
	08.55	Karremans third request for CAS.
	11.00	Bravo 1 is fired upon by Serb tank. The Dutch move back out of sight. Was it fire on the Dutch or was it at the Muslim artillery piece? AHIB fired their artillery piece.
	11.00	Salvage APC arrives at the south position Bravo four to salvage the APC that was stuck there that morning. They are fired upon by a Serb tank and flee back to the compound.
	12.00	Egbers is in a new position with only 1 of the FACs operational.
	Afternoon	Soldiers of OP-D arrive at compound after being held hostage by the Muslims since the day before.
	16.30	Groen orders Bravo 3 and 4 back to the market because they are threatened to be cut off. Serbs move North again from the south. There are no APC there anymore to block them. Capt. Groen orders Bravo 1 back to the compound because he is afraid they will be cut off too.
	18.00	OP-H reports 50 Serb soldiers on the hill overlooking Srebrenica.

	18.30	OP-H reports that Serbs are advancing.
	±18.30	Dutch fire from the market overhead Serb troops and aimed fire. Finally, the goals to request CAS are met.
	±18.45	Karremans fourth requests for CAS.
	19.00	Serbs retreated but fire some rounds at market, no wounded.
	Evening	Some air presence.
	21.00	Dutchbat, and a bit later also Sarajevo are given an offer to leave the enclave. The offer was made by the Serbs. Karremans, Akashi, and Janvier all refuse.
	22.00	Dutch Minister of Defense warns for CAS and the possibility that this will possible cause Dutch casualties
	Janvier	No CAS that night! CAS tomorrow morning.
	24.00	Karremans has a meeting with his Company cdrs. He tells them that at 06.00 airstrikes will come.
Tuesday, 11 July, 1995		
	00.30	Karremans has a meeting with Muslim leadership. He tells them that CAS will be given that morning.
	During the night	Heavy shelling of Srebrenica, 182 detonations.
	02.15	Mortar shell explodes 10 feet from APC near market.
	04.30	OP-H abandoned.
	05.00	First light.
	05.00	Egbers moves out to Bravo 1 to guide the airstrike.
	06.00	No CAS!
	07.00	Airstrike will commence at 07.00.
	08.00	Again request for CAS (5 th time).
	09.30	Groen orders two APC forward from the market to find the Serbs front position. They do and the Serbs have not withdrawn.
	10.00	Karremans requests for the sixth time CAS.
	10.44	Franken orders Blocking 1 forward and they should fire .50 and 81mm mortars. He orders weapons free at 11.17 The squad doesn't fire.
	11.00	Egbers is ordered to move back to the exposed curve at Bravo 1 (show UN flag). They get shelled (tank) at their position after 20 minutes or so.
	11.10	Serb guns open fire. Op-H is hit by mortars and OP-

		M and OP-N are shelled as well.
	12.15	CAS approved for the first time by Akashi and Janvier. The Dutch had requested it 6 times since the beginning of the attack.
	± 12.00	The Refugees start to move to the Dutch compound in Srebrenica and to the North.
	12.30	Shell hit OP-H which the Dutch had just left.
	Afternoon	Soldiers of OP-M arrive at compound in Srebrenica after being held hostage. They think that on their way back the APC might have been driven over refugees.
	13.30	Serb shell detonates in the Dutch compound at Srebrenica between refugees.
	± 14.00	Capt Groen orders the APC's near the market to come back and act as a shield for the fleeing Muslim refugees. Since the Muslims made no effort to protect the town Groen (stay neutral in order to protect the refugees) did not order the Dutch to do so.
	14.42	Two Dutch F-16 give CAS!
	14.47	Janvier orders abandoning of all OP's without getting engaged with the AHiB.
	± 15.00	Egbers retreats to compound
	± 15.30	Compound in Srebrenica is abandoned.
	15.50	Ultimatum to Dutchbat by the Serbs.
	18.30	Karremans receives new orders from HQ.
	20.00	OP-C is robbed of its weapons and personal belongings by AHiB soldiers who threaten to shoot them.
	20.30	Karremans is summoned for a meeting with Serbs.
	23.30	Karremans has a second meeting with Serbs.
Wednesday, July 12, 1995		
	Morning	OP-C is abandoned after Serbs take over the OP. Dutch are taken to Milici.
	Morning	OP-R is abandoned after Serbs take over the OP. Dutch are taken to Bratunac
	Morning	OP-Q is abandoned after Serbs take over the OP. Dutch are taken to Bratunac.
	Morning	OP-P is abandoned after Serbs take over the OP. Dutch can go to Potocari.
	11.30	Karremans has a third meeting with Serbs.
	13.00	Serbs arrive at compound at Potocari.

	15.00	OP-N is abandoned after Serbs take over the OP. Dutch are taken to Bratunac.
Thursday, July 13, 1995		Evacuation of refugees.
Friday, July 14, 1995		Evacuation of refugees.
Saturday, July 15, 1995	19.50	OP-A is abandoned and Dutch soldiers are brought to Milici.

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